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A SUGGESTION TO UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTORS OF CLASSES IN ASTRONOMY.

By C. B. Hill.

In every class which is annually carried through the prescribed work in Practical and Theoretical Astronomy at our Colleges and Universities, an immense amount of laborious computation is undertaken by each student. The text-books contain problems for solution with each set of formulae, and consequently the eclipse of the sun which happened in March, 1858, and the transit of *Mercury*, May, 1832 (for example), are computed over and over again by hundreds of students with a persistence and energy worthy of a better cause.

My idea is that all this expenditure of time and energy might profitably be utilized, with equally valuable educational advantages, for the prediction of future events instead of the verification of past ones. This would serve greatly to interest and to assist the astronomical public, even if it should not materially aid the working observatories.

For instance, an occultation of the planet *Mars* by the moon will take place on the night of Sept. 3–4, 1892; it is possible that *Saturn* on November 14 and *Venus* the following day may present similar phenomena to our Pacific Coast vision; but few of the members of the A. S. P. could find the necessary time to work out the predictions, and ascertain the possibilities and particulars of these interesting phenomena. And while the observation of such events belong more to the old school of astronomy, and may not be considered of particular value at the present day, they certainly interest a very large circle of amateur workers who have, perhaps, neither the time nor the ability to make the predictions from almanac data. It is very distressing, not to say positively discouraging, for a business man to spend all one evening in a painful struggle with the formulae, only to find that sin ψ comes out greater than unity!

I am sure that the A. S. P. would be glad to publish in its journal the results of such predictions made by the University classes—there may be difficulties in the way which I do not fully appreciate, but the suggestion is offered for what it is worth.